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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002138

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV TU CY

SUBJECT: UNSYG SPECIAL ADVISOR DOWNER TALKS TURKEY ON CYPRUS

Classified By: Ambassador James Jeffrey for reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: UNSYG Special Advisor on Cyprus Alexander Downer told the Ambassador December 17 he:  
-- hopes to learn Turkish bottom lines and who speaks for the GOT on Cyprus policy;  
- depends on the U.S. and U.K. to wield influence on the process;  
- foresees referenda by the end of 2009;  
- needs the Turkish General Staff (TGS) to agree to an eventual cut in Turkish troops on the island down to the 650;  
- believes he may be able to sell the Greek Cypriots on a deal if they get what they're looking for on property;  
- worries about the "hard-line" nature of MFA U/S Apakan, but welcomed the Ambassador's depiction of Apakan as someone open to a solution;  
- has rented a home on the island and plans to spend more time there in 2009.  
END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) Visiting Ankara for the second time since being named UNSYG Ban Ki-moon's Special Advisor on Cyprus last July, Downer said he is hoping to open a channel of communication with Ankara to increase the flow of information. During his first visit to Ankara in September, Downer said Apakan had struck him as a hard-liner and someone unlikely to display much in the way of flexibility. However, he had been surprised when Apakan told him in September that Turkey had only one true red-line issue with regard to Cyprus -- the continuation of Turkey's role as a guarantor of Cyprus' security under the Treaty of Guarantee. Ambassador and DCM characterized Apakan as a tough negotiator but one who, in our view, genuinely seeks a fair and equitable settlement of the Cyprus issue. Apakan has the respect and gravitas to be able to bring along enough of Turkey's hard-liners to make a negotiated settlement "sellable" here.

¶3. (C) Downer expressed hope Apakan's description of Ankara's sole red-line was correct and meant Turkey would still be willing to withdraw troops down to the 650 allowed for under the Treaty of Alliance and as TGS had agreed to as part of the Annan Plan. If so, he thinks he can sell a deal to the Greek Cypriots provided they get more of what they are looking for on property. Downer admitted he is struggling with how to gain Greek Cypriot buy-in and indicated he will need to figure out a way to bridge the yawning gap on property and governance issues. He plans to offer three workable alternatives for the Presidency in a proposal being drafted by a Canadian expert on constitutional and governance matters as a way to help address differences over governance. Downer expressed some skepticism concerning the Annan Plan as a basis for the current round of negotiations, noting it is far too complicated and lengthy and, in his view, not "workable" -- especially as a document to be presented to voters in a referendum. He added that Greek Cypriots will need major changes in the Annan Plan to sell it to their electorate.

¶4. (C) Ambassador noted this opening that has allowed for resumption of negotiations will not last long and said the parties will require a strong push to come to an agreement in 2009 before events conspire to once again consign Cyprus to an uncertain, divided future. He urged Downer to provide that push and assured him of strong USG support for his efforts. The UN, and thus Downer, is the only game in town; we will support, but the UN/Downer needs to be active and creative. Downer said he has rented a home on the island in anticipation of spending more time there in ¶2009. He is aiming to reach a conclusion that would allow dual referenda in November or December 2009. He added he is counting on USG and HMG support and assistance to bring along both negotiating parties, as well as Turkey, to a common understanding on Cyprus' future. Characterizing ROC President Christofias as somewhat "anti-American" and noting his tendency to "swear in private about both the U.S. and the UK," Downer admitted that it will not be easy to gain Greek Cypriot buy-in either. He lamented the ultranationalist and anti-Turkish rhetoric and atmosphere surrounding the funeral of former ROC President Papadopoulos earlier in the week, which he described as "extremely ugly."

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at  
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Portal:Turkey>

Jeffrey